

A
L E T T E R
TO A
B I S H O P
From A
M I N I S T E R
OF HIS
D I O C E S S.

(F. W.)



L O N D O N,
Printed in the Year, MDCXCI.

WATER

DEPT

MINISTER

SECRET

SECRET

SECRET

SECRET

SECRET

My Lord,

Since you were pleased, when I last saw you, to require me to acquaint you with what I thought might be of use to you for the doing the greatest good in that Diocess, in which I have lived many years, and to which you are as yet a stranger ; I think my self bound to use that freedom, which you, not only permit, but command me to do.

It is very visible, that there is among us a great decay of Piety, and that generally speaking, we are so far from the Power of Godliness, that we have scarce the Form of it left among us. It will require the utmost Care and the united Counsels of the Bishops to set things right. And since the late Bishops have been deprived, and their Sees vacant, things have grown much worse. And your Lordship will find now more work to do, by reason of the vacancy, since your Predecessors deprivation and absence.

I have lived in your Diocess almost Thirty years, and know it well, having been placed successively in several Parts of it, remote from each other. I will put your Lordship in mind of some things amiss, and, because you desire it, I will freely tell you what I think will be the most power-

ful Remedies, and the most likely to set things right.

I cannot without great grief of Heart tell you, that the Publick Prayers of the Church are very much neglected at your Cathedral Church. There are very few that come to them, even of those who are at leisure, and that are under no Prejudices against them. The Communion, which is ministered once a Week in your Cathedral Church is unfrequented; The Alms collected at it do very little more than defray the charge of the Bread and Wine. Several of the Dignitaries of the Church neglect their Residence enjoined by the Statutes, and many of the Inferior Ministers are notoriously guilty: They are faulty in their Morals, give not due attendance on their Offices, and some have Cures more than one a piece, which are inconsistent with that Duty they owe to the Cathedral Church. There are others still belonging to the Church, that are often seen in Ale-houses, and observed to be in great disorder through their Intemperance.

The Presbyters that you are to consult with, are generally absent from the Church; and your Arch-Deacons, which are your Eyes, are in the Ends of the Earth. They do not, (I speak of some of them) so much as live within the Diocess, and are so far from visiting Parochially, that they do it not at all in Person. They have indeed their Deputies, who do but little more than dine, call over Names, and take their Money. For

For the Clergy of the Country, it must be owned to the honour of God, that there are a considerable number, that are painful and exemplary, and who with great care watch over their Flocks : but there are too many that are supinely negligent. Some there are who have two Cures, and reside on neither. Others I know leave their own Cures, and either become Curates to others, or are hunting after other Preferment in the City. And that which leaves them inexcusable is this, that they do it who are well provided for, and under no temptation of Poverty. There are some that are scandalous in their Lives, and thereby help to debauch others, and prop up the Devil's Kingdom. The Catechizing of Children and Servants, which our Church hath provided for, is very much disused, even by those who vaunt much of their Zeal for the Church. Where it is used, it is many times done so slightly, that it gains not its End. There is not that care taken that there ought to be, in instructing the Youth, and preparing them for the Sacrament. This ought to be done with very great Care and Industry, and particular application. The preparing Children for Confirmation is also neglected. The bare saying the Catechism by heart, is as much as is generally done, and sometimes more.

There are a number of the Clergy very poor, and also very weak, and of small Understanding, and consequently under violent Temptations to bad Compliances, and easily imposed upon. This I reckon

reckon not as altogether their fault, but as their unhappiness. However, 'tis to be considered in this Matter, and must be attended to in the Remedies I shall mention by and by.

For Prophaneness, Contempt of God and Religion, and an intire neglect of the Worship of God (under the Covert of the Act of Indulgence) Swearing, Drunkenness and Uncleaness, and a neglect of Family Religion, they prevail every where as well as here.

There are also some, very few, *Non-Swearers*, but as there are but very few, so they generally are peaceable, and make no Schism, and seem to be willing to receive satisfaction.

But there is a number of other Men who are much worse, I mean those who have taken the Oaths and malign the Government, who have sworn to *K. William*, and plead for *K. James*; who to save their Preferments, have taken the Oath, but avoid the keeping the Fasts lately appointed, and using the Prayers set forth in behalf of the present King.

And thus I have given your Lordship some Account of the present state of your Diocese. I shall now humbly offer, because you command me, what I have to suggest by way of Remedy.

First, I must say as the Man of *Macedonia*, in the Vision, did to *St. Paul*, *Come over and help us*. Your Residence amongst us will be necessary: So great a Cure, as we hope for from you, will not be wrought at a distance. By residing you will better discern the Evils

Evils under which we labour, and the most proper Remedies. Besides, your own Residence and diligent discharge of your Duty, will be a powerful means to engage other Men to do theirs. But if you should spend your time in the City, or about the Court, your Clergy will be remiss, and your Arguments for Residence will avail but little, if they are not backed with that Example.

Secondly, Your next care will be in forming and well governing your Family. Next to the care of your self, that of your Family concerns you. The Apostle tells us so much. *1 Tim. 3. 4, 5.* As your own Example will have a great Influence upon others, so will your Family be a Pattern to the Families under your Care and Influence. The want of this Care hath been of very ill Consequence. And yet we know that some very good Bishops have failed herein. They have taken Servants upon recommendation, and been often deceived and imposed upon, and their Families have been debauched by a few bad Servants that have been imposed upon them. It concerns your Lordship much, that all that are about you be free from *fault* and from *suspicion*, as much as may be.

For the preventing the mischiefs which may follow from want of sufficient care in this Matter, I humbly commend to your Consideration the following Particulars. I. That you entertain your Servants at first upon *Tryal* and upon *Terms*. You may have enough that will serve you upon *Tryal*; and those
that

that are best and least conscious will not refuse it. You will do well to take them upon *Terms* also. To this purpose, if you please, you may draw up some Rules, and put them into a Table, to be hung up in your House, which shall contain the *Conditions* upon which your Servants stay in your Family depends; suppose such as these for some of them, *viz.* That who swears an Oath, or shall be Drunk, or refuse to attend upon the Prayers, and to submit to Instruction, in order to the receiving the Sacrament, &c. shall be forthwith discharged. II. It must be your great care to have a *Censor morum*, some man of strict Piety, that shall be your Servant, and converse with the rest of your Servants. Upon him you may depend for an account of the Manners of the rest. And such Men are to be had, if due care be used. III. 'Twill much concern you that you choose a fit Chaplain. I say a fit one. Every Learned Man is not fit. If it be possible, procure one that is Prudent and Discreet, and a true lover of Souls; such an one as you may depend upon for examination of the young Men that come for Orders, and for instructing your Servants in order to receive the Communion; one that Lives and Preaches well: Keep none that hath a Cure of Souls. 'Twill encourage Non-Residence in others. Choose one that is of a good Temper and of great Candor, and require him to use all your Clergy with all respect imaginable. IV. 'Twill be of great use to you, that your Servants should not only fear but love you. And that they will

will, if they be well used. Do them Kindnesses, and encourage the Diligent and Pious. Allow them good Salaries, and give them ground to hope, that you will advance them higher, as they shall deserve well. Give them good Books, and let not the meanest of them want instruction and encouragement to do well. Let them be taught to pray by themselves as well as with others, and often called upon and excited to lead Lives becoming their Christian Profession. Let there be Books in your Hall for the use of those Servants which have the greatest leisure ; be easie to them, and ready to hear the Cause of the meanest of them, and suffer not any one Servant to Lord it over the rest. In a word, let your Family be a School of Vertue, and a Nursery of Piety, and 'twill not fail of influencing those of others, nor will you want Servants. There are a number of well disposed Parents, that will think it a Blessing, if they can get their Children under your Roof. And tho' this matter will put you to some Care, and require a fixt and steady Resolution, yet will the Benefit which redounds from it, more than make amends for all your Pains and Care about it. On the other hand, a lewd Family of a Bishop, where drinking excessively, Oaths and filthy Discourse obtain, will be of pernicious Consequence to the whole Diocess. I have known the mischief of such a Family, since I remember, and could tell you a large Story of this matter. But I must forbear, lest I should seem to reflect upon the Memory of the Dead. I would have yours so well ordered, that no Man may

go from it worfe, but much better than he came in. I doubt not but your Lordship will establish such Rules, and look so narrowly to the inviolable observance of them, that you will take away all the danger of being corrupted under your Roof.

Thirdly, Your Lordships next great care will be of the Close or Precinct in which the Cathedral Church stands. You will find a great number of Families there, I wish I could not say a great many things amiss also. I have sometimes known it the rudest part of the City. There is little care of Families, no instruction of Youth, and a general neglect of the Prayers of the Church; much more Ale-houses in proportion than elsewhere, either in the City or Diocess, and much more excess also. These things cannot be set right all at once, but yet they may in some time, and with due care and application. You will have many advantages that way. Some of the Inhabitants you'll find well disposed, and many others depend much upon you, and 'tis their interest to comply with you; others are very poor; and you may oblige them by your Hospitality and Charity. There never wants a Justice of Peace or two, who will not refuse to be assistant to you. You may easily put down some of the Ale-houses, and oblige those who will visit others. Let this be done constantly, and let them that are faulty suffer according to Law; and you will soon find another Face of things. But then for the Catechizing of the Youth it will require farther thought. I doubt not but your Lordship may effect that, if you will be (and 'twill be
great

great Charity) at some expence to encourage a Catechist, and to allure the Learners. And for the lewd Custom, that obtained of late days, of prophaning the Lord's-Day by the Youth, who are wont to play openly within the Close on that Day, and by others that spend it in Visits and trifling Conversation, you will in great measure break it, if you publickly complain of it first, and then punish the Faulty as far at least, as the Law allows, and refuse to give or receive Visits upon it.

Fourthly, For the faults of those who belong to the Cathedral you may more easily redress them. You are not only their Bishop, but their Visitor also. You may oblige the Prebendaries to reside, and have full power to chastise the lesser Canons and Lay-Clerks, if they fail in their Duty. And therefore if what is amiss among these Men be not amended, the fault will lye at your Door. You will find your Prayers and Sacraments more frequented, when your Church Dignitaries and Officers do their Duty, and become exemplary in their Lives. You will find your self obliged to make some of these Men severe Examples, if they persist in their neglect. What heart will other Men have to come to your Prayers, which are neglected by these very Men, who ought to be the greatest Examples of Devotion? The Sacrament will be more frequented, when all these are reformed. Call home your *Non-Resident* Prebendaries; and if you cannot displace your Arch-deacons that are out of your Diocess, yet for the future you will not I hope admit any such.

Fifthly, For the disorders in your Diocess, it is not to be supposed they will presently be redressed. Frequent Visitations, and Conferences ; often Preaching, and constant Watchfulness ; Correspondence with the best of your Clergy in all Parts of your Diocess, and the assistance of the worthy Gentry who are in Commission for the Peace ; together with the exercise of your Episcopal Authority, will go a great way toward the removing these disorders. Many of them are so great, that gentle means will not remove them.

Sixthly, As for the *Poverty* and *Weakness* of many of your Clergy, they are not easily to be remedied, but in part they may. For these Evils do not always proceed from the same Cause. The *Poverty* of some is owing to their *Vices*, and their *Weakness* to their *Idleness*. These are to be considered as *immoral* Men, and to be dealt with accordingly. I have known several Persons in your Diocess, that have had but one small Living apiece, that have lived comfortably, brought up numerous Families, of which there are still some Branches left, who are in very comfortable Circumstances. But then these Men have used great diligence, they have laboured hard in Preaching, Instructing, visiting the Sick, composing Differences, and have been burning Lights to others. I have known some others that have had but tolerable Parts, and made but small stay in the Universities, who have afterwards by great diligence in Studies (in which they have sought direction from their Learned Brethren) arrived to a considerable knowledge, and by their

their Pious Examples and Pains, have been very useful in their Places.

But after all it must be granted that there are many *poor* and *weak*, and 'tis none of their fault. They have great Families and small Incomes. Some of them have met with great Sicknes, and (considering their mean Estate) great Losses also. I could name in your Diocess a considerable Number of such Men. They are Men of great Probity, and no contemptible Natural parts; but they labour for Bread for their Wives and Children, and have nothing for Books. And some of these are placed in Market-Towns, which most of all need Ministers of greater Substance. But I reserve the naming them till I see you.

For the Cure of this great Evil I humbly propound the following Particulars by way of Remedy, not only for your own Diocess (for this is no singular Case) but for others also. And, I. Perhaps it would be no hard matter to procure something of a Library in the Market-Towns, especially for the use of the poor Vicar and Neighbouring Clergy. II. A Book of *Homilies*, replenished with weighty Discourses upon all Practical Subjects in Divinity, might be devised by the Governors of the Church, which may be provided at the Parish Charge, and be of great use to these weak Men. The often reading of these Discourses would be of great Advantage to the People and weak Ministers also. III. There may, perhaps, be devised a more compendious way for the Recovery of small Tithes. This would be a great ease to many

ny poor Vicars in your Diocess, who, as things are, find the Remedy as great an Evil as the Disease.

IV. Your Lordship will do well to use your Interest with the Gentlemen in the Country, that these poor Vicars may not be over-rated in the Tax payable to the King. I do not find but the generality of your Diocess pay their Tax chearfully; and, I think, we have great cause so to do. But I must needs say, the poor Vicar hath the greatest reason to complain. For he is not equally dealt with. We will suppose a Vicar have a Vicarage of 40 *l. per annum*, and a Gentleman hath in the same Parish a Farm of the same value. This was the case of a poor Vicar in my Neighbourhood, at the making the last Asselsment, where the poor Vicar and Gentleman both appeared. It was at that Meeting agreed by the Parishioners, that the Vicar and the Gentleman should be Assessed alike, because their Estates were equal. The Vicar on his part complained to the Parishioners first, and then to the Commissioners. The substance of what he said to both was this. *That tho' his Vicarage, if he could recover his full Dues, were worth 40 l. per annum, yet he ought not to be rated at so much as the Gentleman's Farm of the same value: For (says he) my Vicarage hath a Charge upon it. I am obliged to reside and supply the Cure, and, if Sickness hinder me, to hire another to do it. Besides, I lose a third part of it every Year, not being able to recover my just Dues, as this Gentleman can his Rent. I have been at Expence in my Education, to fit my self for my Ministry: And whatever my Tithes are, they are but for*

for my Life : I cannot Mortgage my Vicarage, nor leave it to my Children. I have no Timber to cut to raise Money, which this Gentleman can do upon his Farm. Besides, I am liable to other Charges, which he is free from, viz. to a considerable Tenth Yearly to the King, to Procurations, and Synodals. What his success was I do not meddle with, I leave your Lordship to consider his Case.

V. Your Lordship hath another way of helping such Men. You have some few Livings in your Gift, and some Dignities also. You cannot bestow them better than upon your own Clergy, especially the Poor and Diligent. These will be great Helps to these poor Men, and great Encouragements to Diligence to those of your Diocese, that would otherwise be more remiss and slack. If you give your Preferments to Strangers, you will discourage your Clergy. 'Tis fit that your Dignitaries should be near you to Consult with upon all Occasions. Those whom you Prefer will be obliged to serve you in all your Worthy Designs of doing good; They will also be obliged to Preach before you, and that will excite them to Diligence, and give you an opportunity of putting them in mind where you find them defective, and directing them to do better. They will also learn much by the Conversation of those learned Men who are already Dignitaries in your Church, with whom they will be obliged to converse. But if you bestow your Preferments on Foreigners and Strangers that live remote, if you do it upon Importunity of
great

great Mens Letters, you will soon find the evil effects of it. I could tell you of a Cathedral Church where every Predendary hath within my Memory lived out of the Dioceſs, very much to the diſhonour and loſs of the Church, as well as the diſcouragement of the Clergy of the Dioceſs. Upon which occaſion I could entertain you with a remarkable ſtory, fit to awaken your Lordſhip to Care in this matter, but I omit it, becauſe I know your Lordſhip needs it not. VI. Your Lordſhip may likewise help theſe poor Men by your own Charity, and eſpecially out of your Fines from thoſe Leaſes of Parſonages which your Lordſhip renews. I need not tell you how great Charity it is to encourage the painful Preachers of the Goſpel, I would to God Men of Eſtates would think of it. There is great need of help this way. There are a great number of places in your Dioceſs, and ſome of them in your Lordſhip's Patronage alſo, which want an additional Maintenance. There might be much done this way for the general good; and the Donor may beſtow it on ſuch terms as may ſecure his good Ends. I believe I could eaſily deviſe this. But I muſt not take upon me too much, conſidering I write to one who hath well conſidered theſe things.

Laſtly, Another great Care that lies upon you, will be to run down, as much as may be, that impudence in ſinning which hath gained ground for many Years laſt paſt. Some wiſe Men have feared that
this

this hath been encouraged of late Years to make way for the introducing of Popery. We stood in great preparation for that Religion, and no places did more readily imbrace it than those Cities and Towns that were Notorious for their Debauchery before. In some of these Mass-Houses were set up, and the People began to incline to that Religion, and many were actually reconciled to the Church of *Rome*. A number of those who had before made Shipwreck of their Vertue and Honour turn'd this way; Among which there were very few of the weaker Sex, of any Quality or Condition, but such as had lost their *Vertue*, or at least their *Fame* before.

But who can put a stop to the Oaths and Curses that are heard in every Street? Who can put impudent Profaneness out of Countenance? What ways can be used to suppress the Drunkenness and Uncleaness, and Profanation of the Lord's-Day, which have been so common among us, and so long uncontrolled?

Whatever Difficulties this matter may be attended with, 'tis certain it must be done, or else the Vengeance of Heaven will overtake us. Nothing so surely bodes our future Miseries, even in this life, as this deluge of Wickedness. These Sins cry aloud to Heaven against us. The very Heathens will condemn us, who would not suffer their Gods to be affronted, their Religion to be despised, and their Holy Rites to be profaned.

Nor will the Difficulty be so great under so Excellent a King and Queen. They have given us Proofs already of Their readiness to suppress Profaneness. And I am well informed that they will not be wanting on Their part to do any thing this way still, which shall be reasonably proposed to them. We have the Government on our side, and the Laws too: And if this Matter be applied to with due care, God will bless our Endeavours. Something considerable hath been done this way, and our Affairs succeeded well abroad, even upon the Essay that was made towards the Reforming our Selves at home.

If Their Majesties should think fit still to issue out their Letters to their Justices, and to require the united care of all the Bishops, to promote this good Design; the difficulty will still be less than ever. There are a Number of worthy Gentlemen in Commission, and more may be found, who would be very ready to set upon so good a work. And your Lordship and your Clergy in the several Parts of your Dioceses, would have a mighty influence upon them: Do but heartily set about it, and you will soon find Vice begin to sculk and fly into Corners: 'Twill sneak in a little time and be ashamed to shew its head: If it be not abandoned, yet 'twill no longer be bold and daring: Continue it may, but 'twill not be rampant; And though you cannot destroy it quite, you may take care that it add not to the National Guilt.

But

But I presume now the Bishops are met together, they will consult of this matter, and find out better methods than I am able to suggest.

I am strongly tempted to add something concerning some common Causes of most of the Evils which press us. And to suggest some of my thoughts concerning the best Remedies to remove them, but then I should go beyond my Line. Your Lordships command hath set me my measures, and I shall proceed no farther without your Lordships Order.

And now my Lord, if you come among us, with a sincere desire to do us good, if you vigorously pursue this great End, if you apply your self to the best means, and be steady in your Resolutions, you will indeed meet with hard Words, with Reproach and Opposition, with false People that will endeavour to embarrass and lay stumbling Blocks in your way, but you may be certain of great success at present, and the Generation to come will call you Blessed, and you will in a little while receive an immortal Crown that fadeth not away.

Whereas, if you come with a design to get Riches, and raise a Family, to advance your Nephews, and take your ease, and make your heavy charge a *Sine Cure*, you will not only disappoint the hopes of all good Men, and discourage all them that would be better, but be charged with the Blood of those Souls,

(18)

Souls, that your Blessed Master redeemed with his own precious Blood, and will have a fearful account to give to the great Shepherd at the last day.

You see, my Lord, what freedom I use with you. Nothing could have excused it, had I not been obliged by you to do it. I am,

My Lord,

Ofob. 26.

1691.

Your Lordships most Obedient Servant.

F. W.

F I N I S.

CH, STP